

agree that it is long past time to begin treating those who have dedicated their lives to educating America's children with the respect they deserve. Compared to other professionals, educators are underappreciated and underpaid. This must change if America is to have the finest education system in the world.

Quality education is impossible without quality teaching. If we continue to undervalue educators, it will become harder to attract, and keep, good people in the education profession. While educators' pay is primarily a local issue, Congress can, and should, help raise educators' take-home pay by reducing educators' taxes.

This is why I am introducing the Teachers Tax Cut Act. This legislation provides every teacher in America with a \$1,000 tax credit. I am also introducing the Professional Educators Tax Relief Act, which extends the \$1,000 tax credit to counselors, librarians, and all school personnel involved in any aspect of the K-12 academic program.

The Teacher Tax Cut Act and the Professional Educators Tax Relief Act increase the salaries of teachers and other education professionals without raising federal expenditures. By raising the take-home pay of professional educators, these bills encourage highly qualified people to enter, and remain in, education. These bills also let America's professional educators know that the American people and the Congress respect their work.

I hope all my colleagues join me in supporting our nation's teachers and other professional educators by cosponsoring the Teacher Tax Cut Act and the Professional Educators Tax Relief Act.

FREEDOM FOR JOSÉ MIGUEL MARTÍNEZ HERNÁNDEZ

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about José Miguel Martínez Hernández, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Martínez Hernández has bravely, and peacefully, advocated for liberty and freedom in Cuba, a country that suffers under the nightmare of repression that is the Castro regime. He is an area representative for the 24 February Movement, named for both the commencement of the glorious Cuban War of Independence in 1895, and the day in 1996 when two civilian aircraft carrying four members of the Brothers to the Rescue organization were shot down over international waters by the Cuban dictatorship's fighter jets. The 24 February Movement desires, and struggles for, freedom in Cuba. Mr. Martínez Hernández also hosts an independent library in his home, in order to provide truth instead of the regime's propaganda.

According to Amnesty International, Mr. Martínez Hernández has been harassed and detained on a number of occasions in connection with his pro-democracy activism. Amnesty International also reports that he was taken into custody and interrogated by the tyrant's thugs in June, 2001. Despite being constantly attacked by the despotic regime, Mr. Martínez Hernández continued his efforts to bring freedom to the Cuban people.

Unfortunately, in March 2003, as part of the heinous crackdown of peaceful, pro democracy activists, Mr. Martínez Hernández was arrested. Subsequently, in a sham trial, he was sentenced to 13 years in the totalitarian gulag.

While confined in the deplorable gulag, it has been reported that Mr. Martínez Hernández has been threatened because he has persisted in studying the Bible. It is abhorrent to nature that this brave man languishes in an infernal gulag because he believes in freedom of religion, democracy, and basic human rights for the Cuban people.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush addressed those brave men and women who spread the light of freedom in the darkest corners of the world when he said in his inaugural address, just a few days ago, "Democratic reformers facing repression, prison, or exile can know: America sees you for who you are: the future leaders of your free country." My Colleagues, we must demand the immediate release of José Miguel Martínez Hernández and every political prisoner languishing in the dungeons of tyrants.

THANKING AMANDA CONLEY

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my thanks to Amanda Conley for her faithful and selfless dedication to our country.

On a daily basis, we are reminded of the tremendous costs that freedom often requires. Throughout the history of the United States of America, men, woman and families have given their all to further our constitutional hopes and dreams.

For 36 years, Amanda Conley has tirelessly supported the men of her family. Born on-base the daughter of a Navy Chaplain, Mrs. Conley grew up in the midst of great men and women that served and protected our Nation from enemies both foreign and domestic. Through three deployments to the Mediterranean and a year-long assignment to the jungles of Vietnam, as well as countless assignments to various destinations, Mrs. Conley endured what seemed like endless separation from her father.

As her father's service in the Navy came to an end, Mrs. Conley re-dedicated her support to the United States military by becoming a Navy wife. She endured the same sporadic deployments and nights alone as had marked her childhood, including a tour in the Persian Gulf and 6 years as a single mother while her husband Steve was assigned to recruiting duty.

Every day United States servicemen and women serve with fervency and zeal due in large part to the continued support of their spouses and loved ones. Troop morale stems from the loyal and endless efforts and sacrifices of their loved ones on the homefront, those who benefit from freedom each day because of what their husbands, wives, daughters and sons contribute through their service.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, we are humbled by and appreciative to men and women like Mrs. Amanda Conley, who are willing to sacrifice and sup-

port those that they love to ensure the future of our great Nation.

To military spouses and families everywhere, thank you. We owe you a heartfelt debt of gratitude.

INTRODUCTION OF THE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT TAX CUT ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the Education Improvement Tax Cut Act. This act, a companion to my Family Education Freedom Act, takes a further step toward returning control over education resources to private citizens by providing a \$3,000 tax credit for donations to scholarship funds to enable low-income children to attend private schools. It also encourages private citizens to devote more of their resources to helping public schools, by providing a \$3,000 tax credit for cash or in-kind donations to public schools to support academic or extra curricular programs.

I need not remind my colleagues that education is one of the top priorities of the American people. After all, many members of Congress have proposed education reforms and a great deal of time is spent debating these proposals. However, most of these proposals either expand federal control over education or engage in the pseudo-federalism of block grants. Many proposals that claim to increase local control over education actually extend federal power by holding schools "accountable" to federal bureaucrats and politicians. Of course, schools should be held accountable for their results, but they should be held accountable to parents and school boards not to federal officials. Therefore, I propose we move in a different direction and embrace true federalism by returning control over the education dollar to the American people.

One of the major problems with centralized control over education funding is that spending priorities set by Washington-based Representatives, staffers, and bureaucrats do not necessarily match the needs of individual communities. In fact, it would be a miracle if spending priorities determined by the wishes of certain politically powerful representatives or the theories of Education Department functionaries match the priorities of every community in a country as large and diverse as America. Block grants do not solve this problem as they simply allow states and localities to choose the means to reach federally-determined ends.

Returning control over the education dollar for tax credits for parents and for other concerned citizens returns control over both the means and ends of education policy to local communities. People in one community may use this credit to purchase computers, while children in another community may, at last, have access to a quality music program because of community leaders who took advantage of the tax credit contained in this bill.

Children in some communities may benefit most from the opportunity to attend private, parochial, or other religious schools. One of the most encouraging trends in education has been the establishment of private scholarship programs. These scholarship funds use voluntary contributions to open the doors of quality private schools to low-income children. By